

Clough-Langdon House
21 Unity Street
Boston
Suffolk County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-342

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

CLOUGH-LANGDON HOUSE

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Location: 21 Unity Street, Boston, Suffolk County,
Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Christ Church Corp., 193 Salem Street, Boston,
Massachusetts.

Present Use: Unoccupied.

Brief Statement
of Significance: This is one of three brick houses built in
Boston between 1700-1720.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:
 - a. Ebenezer Clough, 1711-1724 /Suffolk Deeds, 26:72;
Suffolk Probate, 23:107/.
 - b. John Clough and Susannah Clough, 1724-1741/2 /Suffolk
Deeds, 62:158; 67:26A/.
 - c. Jonathan Brown, 1741/2-1756 /Suffolk Deeds, 62:158;
67:26A/.
 - d. Edward Langdon, 1756 /Suffolk Deeds, 89:75/.
 - e. Joseph Peirce and widow and daughter, 1756-1835
/Suffolk Deeds, 89:148; Suffolk Probate, 53:613/.
 - f. Wm. Dillaway, 1835-1872 /Suffolk Deeds, 392:227;
406:175; Suffolk Probate, 457:52/.
 - g. Succession of owners to 1959 when acquired by Christ
Church.
2. Date of erection: Ebenezer Clough acquired land without
house in 1711 /Suffolk Deeds, 26:72/, and mortgaged
property with a building then on it in 1720 /Suffolk
Deeds, 29:236/, a date which coincides with the style of
house.
3. Builder: Probably Ebenezer Clough, the original owner,
who is called "Mason" in the deeds.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: For the greater part
of its history, this house was a 2-1/2 story gambrel,
L-shaped in plan. It was still described as two stories
in 1798 when Direct Tax was levied (original ms., New
England Historical & Genealogical Society), but a third

story was added soon after (judging from the style of the trim). Then, sometime before Jan. 16, 1886, when the house appeared on a map of the property (filed with Suffolk Deeds), an addition had been made at the rear (probably c.1870, judging from the style of trim) which made the house oblong rather than L-shaped. The ground floor has, in modern times, been completely renovated for shops.

5. Important old views: An exterior photograph taken late in the 19th or early in the 20th century is on file at the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
6. References: The facts in this photo-data book are a revision and correction of those published by Frank Chouteau Brown in Old-Time New England (Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities quarterly bulletin) Series No. 128, which are incomplete and not entirely accurate.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Ebenezer Clough, builder, was also one of the masons who did bricklaying for Christ Church. (See masons' accounts, ms. in Christ Church Archives).

Edward Langdon, a merchant, owned the building for only some six months; however, his name has become associated with it.

A son-in-law of Joseph Peirce, John Bunstead, who owned the house through right of his wife, was a prominent participant in the Boston Tea Party, but apparently never lived on the premises.

- C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Boston City Assessors' records.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: One of three brick houses built in Boston between 1700-1720 - and of the three, the most interesting architecturally, i.e., it has the most elaborate brickwork and the best staircase.
2. Condition of Fabric: Fair (rehabilitation is scheduled).

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. General layout: Originally the house was L-shaped in plan, 2-1/2 stories high, with a gambrel roof. Later additions made it oblong in plan and three stories high.
2. Foundations: Stone, with a moulded brick course at the top of the foundation level.
3. Wall construction: Brick masonry, laid in Flemish bond.
4. Chimneys: Three brick chimneys, one is on the original rear wall of the left-hand room, and two are on the original east wall. On the east wall, the two chimneys stand adjacent, forming part of the solid brick end wall. A fourth chimney is in the later addition.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: The front entrance was made smaller at some time, but the original lintel of rubbed, molded, brick remains intact. The opening is otherwise plain.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Plain (later) wooden frames with early and later 19th century sash set in plain brick openings with lintels of rubbed brick; keystones of rubbed brick on the first floor windows show in early photos, but have been removed.
6. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Flat wooden roof with tar paper covering.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Slightly projecting, corbelled brick cornice which dates from the addition of the third story.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor Plans (Of original house): Central entrance hall with staircase of triple run; large single room to the left, and large room to the right, with a second room behind that in the original ell. Plan repeated above.
2. Stairways: The original staircase is intact, including acorn pendants. It runs from the first floor to the present third floor, the original gambrel attic. It is a U-shaped, closed string stair with square rail and newels, and turned balusters.

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3. Flooring: Original wide board flooring in the second floor room in the rear ell. Elsewhere covered with linoleum.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on lath; plain board dado in the southwest second floor room; fireplace wall of raised bolection molding in the second floor, east room, to the right of the entrance.
5. Doorways and doors: Original two-panel doors remain in the rear ell room on the second floor, and to the cellar under main staircase in the central hall.
6. Trim: Molded wood trim on door and window openings, fireplace paneling, and ceiling cornices.
7. Hardware: There is very little original hardware; but a pair of strap hinges remains on a closet door in the rear ell room on the second floor.
8. Lighting: Modern electrical fixtures.
9. Heating: Former tenants heated with gas. Original fireplaces, although bricked up, with original trim remain in the front and rear rooms on the northeast side of the house on the second floor. A portion of the original fireplace, now bricked up, with later mantel remains in the second floor southwest room.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house comes out to the sidewalk in front and abuts Christ Church property in rear. It faces the southeast.

Prepared by Abbott L. Cummings, Assistant Director
Society for the Preservation of New
England Antiquities
Boston, Massachusetts - January 1960
AND
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National Park Service - March 1961